

Message Text

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46

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-05 SR-02 ORM-03 SS-20 NSC-07 L-03

H-03 SAJ-01 SY-04 FBIE-00 VO-03 SCA-01 INSE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15

PRS-01 SP-03 DRC-01 /113 W
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R 051005Z JUL 74

FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0594

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L L E N I N G R A D 0 6 1 8

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL, UR

SUBJECT: DEFECTION OF BALLET STAR BARYSHNIKOV

1. NEWS ABOUT DEFECTION TO CANADA OF KIROV TOP MALE BALLET STAR MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV NOW WIDELY KNOWN TO LENINGRAD CULTURAL COMMUNITY. NEWS CAME LIKE A "BLOW ON THE HEAD" AS ONE OFFICIAL OF HERMITAGE DESCRIBED IT. IT WILL CREATE SEVERE MORALE PROBLEM FOR KIROV THEATRE AND EMBARRASSMENT FOR ITS MANAGEMENT, ESPECIALLY AS BARYSHNIKOV HAS BEEN GIVEN BOTH KOMSOMOL AWARD AND TITLE OF MERITORIOUS ARTIST OF RFSSR, AND HAS A BID TO TRANSFER TO BOLSHOI IN MOSCOW. IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT BARYSHNIKOV'S EXCEPTIONAL TALENT WOULD TEMPT HIM TO FOLLOW EXAMPLE OF NUREYEV AND MAKAROVA, BUT HE IS CONSIDERED MORE STABLE THAN NUREYEV AND HIS DEFECTION CAME AS A SURPRISE TO MOST. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO GOSSIP, BARYSHNIKOV WAS SUSPECTED OF WANTING TO STAY ABROAD AND WAS PERMITTED TO GO ON CURRENT TOUR BECAUSE KOLPAKOVA TOOK RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIM AND BECAUSE HE HAD JUST USED UP MOST OF HIS CAPITAL IN BUYING A NEW VOLGA CAR. THERE IS SOME TENDENCY TO PUT BLAME FOR BARYSHNIKOV'S DISSATISFACTION ON FORMER STARS AND CURRENT BALLET TEACHERS SERGEYEV AND DUDINSKAYA FOR DOMINATING THE KIROV SCENE IN THE WORST TRADITION OF HAS-BEENS.

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2. ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT ESTABLISHMENT PAINTERS OF LENINGRAD

WHO IS LIBERAL IN HIS PRIVATE CONVERSATION, TOLD US THAT BARYSHNIKOV'S ACTION WAS A BLUNDER BECAUSE PERMISSION FOR ROSTROPOVICH TO SPEND TWO YEARS ABROAD WAS WIDELY REGARDED AS AN IMPORTANT POLICY CHANGE. BARYSHNIKOV PROBABLY COULD HAVE ACHIEVED THE SAME DEAL AND KEPT HIS POSITION IN THE SOVIET CULTURAL WORLD. TO DEFECT IN THE OLD MANNER IS CONSIDERED ENELEGANT AT THIS STAGE.

3. SOVIET CONTACTS ARE CONCERNED THAT ORTHODOX PARTY FORCES WILL RETALIATE BY MAKING IT STILL MORE DIFFICULT FOR SOVIETS TO MAKE VISITS ABROAD. AND OF COURSE ANY ANNOUNCEMENT OF DESIRE TO GO ABROAD IN ITSELF IS GROUNDS FOR SUSPICION UNLESS FAMILY TIES OF INDIVIDUAL ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO TIE HIM OR HER TO USSR. BARYSHNIKOV WAS NOT CURRENTLY MARRIED AND HIS ONLY CLOSE RELATION IS A SISTER.

4. LENINGRADERS, INCLUDING CONSULAR CORPS, ARE DISAPPOINTED AT LOSS OF BARYSHNIKOV, WHILE RECOGNIZING BARYSHNIKOV'S RIGHT TO DEFECT, COMMENT BY LENINGRADERS THAT BARYSHNIKOV EVENTUALLY COULD HAVE LEFT USSR WITHOUT "DEFECTING" MAY BE CORRECT.
GLEYSTEN

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